

Toxic Porn, Toxic Sex: A Real Look at Pornography

*Finding freedom from porn addiction,
pornography addiction, the effects of pornography*

by Gene McConnell

Porn & addiction...sex out of context

On a cold, dark night, there's nothing better than a blazing fire in the fireplace. You can pile on the wood and let it burn nice and warm. It's safe, warm, relaxing and romantic. Now take that same fire out of the fireplace (which was built for it) and drop it in the middle of the living room. Suddenly it becomes destructive. It can burn down the whole house and kill everyone inside. Sex is like that fire. As long as it's expressed in the protective commitment of a marriage relationship, it's wonderful, warm and romantic. But porn takes sex outside that context.



Porn - A Big Business

It's a big business that makes a lot of money and doesn't care how. They'll show you whatever they think will make you come back and buy more. "There were 11,000 porn video titles last year versus 400 movie releases from Hollywood last year...[and] 70,000 pornographic web sites." (*New York Times*, May 20, 2001, "Naked Capitalists")

Porn's Image of Sex

One of the most vital parts of mental environment is a healthy idea of who we are sexually. If these ideas are polluted, a critical part of who we are becomes twisted. The porn culture tells you that sex, love and intimacy are all the same thing. In porn, people have sex with total strangers -- people they just met. All that matters is my satisfaction. It doesn't matter whose body I'm using, as long as I get it. Porn gets you to think that sex is something you can have anytime, anywhere, with anyone, with no consequences.

What Sex is Really About

Porn's outlook is stupid and shallow. Relationships are not built on sex, but on commitment, caring and mutual trust. In that context, like fire in the fireplace, sex is wonderful. Being with someone who loves and accepts you, someone who is committed to you for your whole lives together, someone you can give yourself completely to, that is what makes sex really great.

Effects of Pornography: The Lies of Porn

You can't learn the truth about sex from pornography. It doesn't deal in truth. Pornography is not made to educate, but to sell. So, pornography will tell whatever lies attract and hold the audience. Porn thrives on lies -- lies about sex, women, marriage and a lot of other things. Let's look at some of those lies and see just how badly they can mess up your life and attitudes.

- Lie #1 - *Women are less than human*
The women in *Playboy* magazine are called "bunnies," making them cute little animals or "playmates," making them a toy. *Penthouse* magazine calls them "pets." Porn often refers to women as animals, playthings, or body parts. Some pornography shows only the body or the genitals and doesn't show the face at all. The idea that women are real human beings with thoughts and emotions is played down.

- **Lie #2 - Women are a "sport"**
Some sports magazines have a "swimsuit" issue. This suggests that women are just some kind of sport. Porn views sex as a game and in a game, you have to "win," "conquer," or "score." Men who buy into this view like to talk about "scoring" with women. They start judging their manhood by how many "conquests" they can make. Each woman I "score" with is another trophy on my shelf, another "notch" in my belt to validate my masculinity.
- **Lie #3 - Women are property**
We've all seen the pictures of the slick car with the sexy girl draped over it. The unspoken message, "Buy one, and you get them both." Hard-core porn carries this even further. It displays women like merchandise in a catalog, exposing them as openly as possible for the customer to look at. It's not surprising that many young men think that if they have spent some money taking a girl out, they have a right to have sex with her. Porn tells us that women can be bought.
- **Lie #4 - A woman's value depends on the attractiveness of her body**
Less attractive women are ridiculed in porn. They are called dogs, whales, pigs or worse, simply because they don't fit into porn's criteria of the "perfect" woman. Porn doesn't care about a woman's mind or personality, only her body.
- **Lie #5 - Women like rape**
"When she says no, she means yes" is a typical porn scenario. Women are shown being raped, fighting and kicking at first, and then starting to like it. Porn teaches men to enjoying hurting and abusing women for entertainment.
- **Lie #6 - Women should be degraded**
Porn is often full of hate speech against women. Women are shown being tortured and humiliated in hundreds of sick ways and begging for more. Does this kind of treatment show any respect for women? Any love? Or is it hatred and contempt that porn is promoting toward women?
- **Lie #7 - Little kids should have sex**
One of the biggest sellers in pornography is imitation "child" porn. The women are "made-up" to look like little girls by wearing pony tails, little girl shoes, holding a teddy bear. The message of the pictures and cartoons is that adults having sex with kids is normal. This sets the porn user up to see children in a sexual way.
- **Lie #8 - Illegal sex is fun**
Porn often has illegal or dangerous elements thrown in to make sex more "interesting." It suggests that you can't enjoy sex if it isn't weird, illegal or dangerous.
- **Lie #9 - Prostitution is glamorous**
Porn paints an exciting picture of prostitution. In reality, many of the women portrayed in pornographic material are runaway girls trapped in a life of slavery. Many having been sexually abused. Some of them are infected with incurable sexually transmitted diseases that are highly contagious and often die very young. Many take drugs just to cope.

Effects of Pornography: Bottom Line

Pornography makes a profit from the ruined lives of young women and entraps men who will spend lots of time AND money succumbing to their product.

Effects of Pornography: The Power of Images

It's dumb to think that the things we see and hear don't affect us. We all admit that good music, good movies and good books add a lot to our lives. They can relax us, educate us, move us or inspire us. Obviously, good images do good things to us. It's not hard to believe that bad images can do bad things to us.



Images can also persuade us. Businesses know that if they can get a persuasive image of their product in front of you during a highly emotional moment, it will sink into your subconscious mind. The advertising scientists are so good at what they do, they can predict just how much more of their product you will buy if you see their ad. Sometimes, viewers don't even see the name of the product. Reeses Pieces paid a huge price just to have their candy shown for a few seconds in the movie "ET," and sales of Reeses Pieces skyrocketed. Why? Because the emotions connected with watching that small boy reaching out to the alien were transferred to the visual image of the candy. If a split second view of a product - even when it's not the center of attention -- can affect people's behavior, imagine the effect of a movie that keeps your attention glued to the screen for an hour and a half with sexually explicit images.

What are the effects of pornography on a man?

What kinds of ideas is porn putting into our heads? If the wrong things keep getting dumped in, your mental environment can get so polluted that your life is going to have problems. One of the most vital parts of mental environment is a healthy idea of who we are sexually. If these ideas are polluted, a critical part of who we are becomes twisted.

Porn Addiction: The Pull of Porn

Not everyone who sees porn will become addicted. Some will just come away with toxic ideas about women, sex, marriage, and children. However, some will have some kind of emotional opening that allows the addiction to really grab hold. The porn companies don't mind at all if you become completely addicted to their product. It's great for business. Dr. Victor Cline has divided the progress of addiction into several stages; addiction, escalation, desensitization, and acting out. For porn addicts, I've found that there is another stage that comes first -- early exposure. Let's look at these stages:

EARLY EXPOSURE

Most guys who get addicted to porn start early. They see porn when they are very young and it gets its foot in the door.

PORN ADDICTION

You keep coming back to porn. It becomes a regular part of your life. You're hooked and can't quit.

ESCALATION

You start to look for more graphic pornography. You start using porn that disgusted you earlier. Now, it excites you.

DESENSITIZATION

You start to become numb to the images you see. Even the most graphic porn doesn't excite you any more. You become desperate to feel the same thrill again, but you can't find it.

ACTING OUT SEXUALLY

This is the point where men make a crucial jump and start acting out the images they have seen. Some move from the paper and plastic images of porn into the real world, with real people, in destructive ways.

Porn Addiction: Am I Addicted?

If you see any of these patterns in your life, you need to put the brakes on right now. Is porn becoming more and more in control of your life? Do you have trouble putting it down? Do you keep going back for more?

Porn Addiction: What Can I Do?

The first thing you've got to do is admit that you struggle with pornography. Believe me, you are not strange or unusual if you do. Millions of men are at various stages in the struggle with porn. It's really not surprising. The porn industry has spent billions of dollars trying to snare you. Is it really shocking that they have succeeded? For some of you there may also be issues in your past, such as abuse or sexual exposure, that makes porn

addiction even harder to shake. There is only so much you can do in fighting addiction without help.

You need someone to help you break this addiction. Overcoming the secrecy is absolutely vital. You probably can't escape addiction without it. That doesn't mean everyone has to know you're struggling. Pick someone you can trust who counsels men who are having problems with addiction -- a pastor, youth group leader or counselor. Someone you can completely trust, feel safe with and has experience in the area of addiction isn't going to be surprised.

Is There Any Freedom from Porn Addiction?

Pornography entraps you with lies. In contrast, God can lead us into truth. Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."¹ Those who heard Jesus say this were offended and countered, "We have never been slaves of anyone, how can you say that we shall be set free?"² And Jesus explained that people are enslaved to sin, but that He can set you free.³

Sin not only enslaves us, but it distances us from God. And no one is perfect. No one is righteous in God's eyes. Instead we're told that "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way."⁴ We all deserve God's judgment and punishment. Yet God, who is holy and loving, provided a solution for our sin, so that we would not have to be justly condemned. He personally took the punishment for our sin on Himself. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was tortured and died on the cross for our sin so that we could be forgiven. Three days later Jesus rose from the dead, just as He said He would. And He now offers you a relationship with Him. One of the most amazing statements in the Bible is this one, "If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."⁵

The Most Important Relationship

In your search for intimacy and love, pornography is an empty substitute for real love. We have been created by God to have our intimacy needs met most deeply by God Himself. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."⁶ In contrast to the darkness and destruction that pornography can bring to people's lives, Jesus said, "I came that they might have life, and have it more abundantly."⁷ God offers you his forgiveness through a relationship with Him. Do you want to ask Him to forgive you and come into your life? You can tell Him right now. If you need help putting this into words, here is prayer that might help:

"Lord Jesus, I am aware of my sin, and I know that you are also. I ask you to forgive me and cleanse me. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I ask you to come into my life right now and begin to work in my life. Direct my life as you see fit. Thank you for your forgiveness and for coming into my life right now."